

EDGEFIELD COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes September 4, 2007

The regular meeting of the Edgefield County Council was held at 6:00 P. M. Tuesday, September 4, 2007, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter Street, Edgefield, SC.

Members present

C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman
Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman
Norman Dorn, Councilman
Joel D. Hudson, Councilman
B. Everette Kitchens, Councilman

Others present:

John W. Pettigrew, Jr., County Administrator
John F. Byrd, Jr., County Attorney
Lynn Strom, Finance/Budget Manager
Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council
and others as per list attached

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Kneece and the invocation was given by Rev. Lloyd. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

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The motion to approve the August 7, 2007 Minutes of the Regular County Council Meeting, as presented, was made by Councilman Kitchens, seconded by Councilman Hudson. The motion carried unanimously.

Reports

Councilman Kitchens did ask the status of plans for an animal shelter in Edgefield County. The Administrator stated that Capt. Wash of the Sheriff's Department is heading up that effort for them and they are trying to come up with some plans for a shelter. Also, we are trying to find a suitable site at the old landfill location on Weaver Road. Digging is taking place there but they keep running into trash. An area at the back of the landfill hopefully will not have trash and maybe could be considered. Certainly you do not want to build a shelter on top of trash because there has to be a septic tank. Mr. Pettigrew said that he has spoken with the assistant warden at the federal prison about the possibility of the prison providing some labor to help with the construction and that request has been forwarded to the Atlanta Regional Office. No response at this time.

Councilman Dorn asked what concern would the county have with Report No. 3, "Correspondence from Manufactured Housing Institute of SC concerning removal of dilapidated & abandoned homes." This report notifies local government of the new law clarifying the procedures for local jurisdictions to remove and dispose of homes (mobile

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and manufactured) that are an issue.

No ordinances.

Resolutions

Resolution No. 07-08-301, "A Resolution Providing for a Budget Policy for Edgefield County Establishing and Maintaining an Unreserved, Unrestricted Fund Balance Equivalent to at Least Four (4) Months of Operating Expenditures" was the next agenda item for consideration.

There was opposition from the public of having a four month reserve.

There were questions by Councilman Kitchens as to why we needed four months. Mr. Pettigrew explained that reserves are there just in case you need them for unexpected expenditures and to cover expenses during months when there is little property tax collected. The large portion of taxes are collected in December and January to fund the budget which became effective the previous July.

Councilman Kitchens wanted to know how much millage would be levied to maintain the reserve at 4 months. Mr. Pettigrew and Lynn Strom explained that the current unreserved, unrestricted fund balance was already at the four month level. Therefore, there is no need to levy millage to accomplish the goal. The only taxes to be levied would be the amount needed to fund the current year expenditures.

Councilman Kitchens then asked how much millage could be reduced if we were to only maintain 3 months of reserves. Lynn Strom explained that it would only be a one time savings. After the reserve hit three months, we would have to increase the millage back to its original level in order to meet the budget.

Councilman Hudson explained that we have been working hard to get to the four month level and now that we are there, we should not go back to three months.

Motion was made by Councilman Kitchens to get additional information for the October meeting. Motion died for a lack of a second.

Motion was made by Councilman Bright, seconded by Councilman Dorn, to pass Resolution No. 07-08-301 and to insert the wording in the resolution "not to exceed four months." Motion carried with Councilman Kitchens opposing. (Any excess will be put back into the fund.)

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New Business

Energy savings.

Mr. James Bennett with the Energy Systems Group stated that he had met previously with Mr. Pettigrew and he and Mrs. Strom had provided him with a detailed billing of the county buildings in regards to the square footage and also the cost of utilities for the past year. Mr. Bennett informed council of the various ways in which his company could save the county money in its utility costs. Of course for the county to save money it will also cost the county.

Motion was made by Councilman Hudson, seconded by Councilman Kneece, to receive Mr. Bennett's presentation as information. Motion carried unanimously.

Vision 20/20 (Edgefield County Chamber of Commerce)

Mr. Robert Long represented the Chamber in the absence of the Director and the Chairman (prior commitments). Mr. Long was present to promote the Edgefield County Vision 20/20 Kick-off sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce.

"We are working with the SC Department of Commerce's Rural Development Division to kick off a new strategic planning process for Edgefield County. This process was last done approximately ten (10) years ago (1997) so the plan that has been done in the past on the strategic planning process has been completed but is ten years out of date basically.

One of the important things to note is that Edgefield County currently, from the Department of Commerce's point of view, is (there is a five tier system when it comes to incentives) that Edgefield is a tier two, which means we are a least developed county. One of the things this does, is open the opportunity for what is referred to as RIF (Rural Infrastructure Funds). These are funds that are controlled by the Department of Commerce. They are available only to tier one (distressed) and tier two (least developed) counties. However, before you can apply for any of those funds you have to have a current strategic plan, which right now we do not have.

The plan itself has been dubbed Vision 20-20, but basically it is the strategic planning process. We have a kick-off meeting which is scheduled for Monday, September 17th, 6:30 until 8:30 at JET Middle School. This initial meeting will be a public forum so we are encouraging the county government, municipalities, as well as the citizens to attend. We want as much public input into this opening session as possible. The Department of Commerce's Rural Development staff will be facilitating this public forum. Once we have the initial kick-off the goal is to group the comments and suggestions into categories: economic development, education, public safety, whatever comes out from the initial meetings. From there you would have committee meetings to be scheduled

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every two weeks beginning Sept. 20th. Ideas from the public sector would be brought to these meetings to come up with action items and goals. The goal is to have by November 15th a completed draft of the strategic plan that will actually be a working document – nothing set in stone. The goal would be to periodically go back to the strategic planning process and update it, change it, modify it as necessary.”

Mr. Long encouraged participation from county council, all elected officials, and municipalities, as well as the citizens on September 17th.

Request for use of county’s concession trailer

Mr. Joel Jolly with Edgefield Heritage Jubilee addressed council concerning the use of the county’s concession trailer for the Heritage Jubilee Festival. Mr. Jolly stated that last year’s festival was the first year the festival was turned into a fund raising event that the county’s four elementary schools benefited from a barbecue competition. “One of the problems last year was controlling the environment of barbecue sales. We were not able to efficiently be able to offer to the public the sale of barbecue so therefore we lost money to give to the county schools because the sales could not be controlled. There is a mobile concession stand at Bettis Park that we would certainly like to use at the festival this year for the Saturday barbecue sales (approximately 1,000 lbs.). We are asking permission to use the mobile unit at Oakley Park for the festival in October. The Festival would be responsible for moving the trailer and we will put on an insurance rider to cover any liability for injuries or damage. It will be returned in as good or better condition than when we borrowed it.”

Motion was made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by Councilman Hudson, to approve the use of the mobile concession trailer to the Town of Edgefield (Heritage Jubilee). Motion carried with Councilman Bright opposing.

Councilman Kitchens made a motion for the county to establish a policy for the use of the trailer by other entities with input from the recreation commission. Councilman Hudson seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Preventive equipment maintenance

Mike Casey, EMA Director, asked for council’s consideration concerning preventive maintenance on equipment belonging to the county’s emergency communication system. This is composed of the 911 center and the two tower sites where the radios are located. These are referred to as repeater sites: one is at the old landfill site off Weaver Road and the other is off DeLaughter Drive at the county water treatment plant in the Merriwether section.

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“Each of these buildings, which is about the same size as the little buildings at the convenience centers, houses a radio for the sheriff, radio for all of the fire departments, a two-way radio for EMS, a two-way radio for county government. All of those radios used by their respective agency or discipline, plus as EMA Director I work off the county’s fire repeater. All of those radio systems are important in day to day operations as well as in an emergency for the timely dispatch of emergency crews.”

“Just recently, because of bad weather in the lower end of the county, a problem arose with the south repeater (went off) and in checking out the problem it was found that the generator was not working – a dead battery. In checking the north tower there were some problems. These problems have been taken care of but I was asked to present this to council to ask for guidance on a remedy.”

“In doing a survey of both sites, I found a number of things that are disturbing. First and foremost there is no regular maintenance that has taken place. With a generator you have both a combustion engine service as well as the generator that creates the energy. Really, a generator specialist is needed to keep check to make sure they are operating properly. I feel a maintenance contract is needed. There are a number of issues: gaskets that need to be replaced, routine maintenance that should be performed on the generators now. They are subject to failure. To have the immediate gasket repairs and other such work done the Hi-Tech Service that repaired the south tower gave a quote of approximately \$700 – that does not include the cost of the battery and other things.

The other thing that is bothering me about the sites, first and foremost, both of the transmitter buildings have absolutely no ventilation system whatsoever. Each one of those transmitters gives off or radiates a certain amount of heat as it is being used. Couple that with these one hundred plus degree days that we have had –the buildings have no insulation, no air system at all. Also, chain link fencing around the towers certainly would hinder unauthorized entry and would reduce liability. It would also present a physical barrier to keep someone from running into the tower.

These are not terrible “fixes” to take care of but things that need to be taken care of. The generator at the north tower should be moved to the outside of the building to a smaller building. Insulate the buildings. At the present there is no ceiling, just the rafters and the bottom side of the roof. Put in a ventilation system (consider putting in the motel type heating and air conditioning units). At least have some ventilation going now. It would take a lot of stress off the two-way equipment and extend the life of it.

Motion was made by Councilman Kitchens, seconded by Councilman Hudson, to approve \$700 for repairs to the generators, etc. for the North and South radio towers,

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from account 100-279. Motion carried unanimously.

FEMA grant

Mr. Casey asked to address council concerning a public assistance grant from FEMA that is tied in to a debris (any type of wind damage or other damage that requires a great deal of removal) removal plan that they stress that the county should have. FEMA will actually pay for the debris removal. They have state approved vendors that will come in to grind and burn the debris, etc. They will even give the county a five percent additional payback as an incentive to have a debris removal plan. One of the big requirements is that we have someone locally to manage the program. Now, it has to be declared a disaster – not the day to day limbs that fall from a tree. With council's permission I would like to have the go-ahead to establish a debris removal plan, which is a pre-requisite. Then you qualify for the FEMA funding. If the county will set up a recycling program so this can be recycled for less than what it was originally thought, FEMA says keep the excess money. They will pay the county in-kind reimbursement for any local labor used. For instance, a county employee working directly on a debris removal program, the state will pay that employee's time and benefits.

Councilman Hudson made the motion for Mike Casey to establish a debris removal plan for Edgefield County. Councilman Kitchens seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Surplus equipment on line

The administrator stated he recently learned of the "*E-Bay of Government Surplus*" (*Government Deals.com*). Only government entities sell on this site, anyone can buy on this site and there is a charge of seven and one half percent commission if the item is sold. If an item does not sell there is no charge. You can set a reserve price. The equipment or vehicle or whatever it may be, is sold as is, where is, you do not have to take them anywhere else. Mr. Pettigrew feels this would be a good place for the county to sell surplus ambulances and other items. We currently have one (ambulance) and soon will have two to sell. If council is interested in the county being a seller on that site we have to sign up with them. They are in twenty one (21) counties in South Carolina and twenty six (26) cities that use their services. Believe there would times we would want to use them.

There would be no conflict with *Wood Auction Company* because they specialize in heavy equipment (motor graders, dump trucks) and that site is probably better for that because they have live auctions (two a year) that you have to carry the equipment to the sale site.

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Motion was made by Councilman Hudson, seconded by Councilman Kitchens, to allow the administrator sign with gov.deals.com as the seller. Motion carried unanimously.

EMS sub-station

The EMS Director, Jewel Plaxco, spoke to council concerning a future EMS sub-station (budget item for next year). This “project” has been in the process for approximately three to four years to have a sub-station located on Highway 25 (south). She has applied for a grant to purchase a modular building to be used as a sub-station, but has received no reply to date. The cost of the building is around \$23,000, plus the extras that would be needed (furniture, carport, etc.). The grant is generally about \$16,500 to \$18,000.00.

At the present time EMS averages going to stand-by two to three times a day. That is driving from Merriwether to the County Line Fire Department (using the fire department as a stand-by point). This would move the sub-station from the present location in the Merriwether area.

Fire Board appointments

Two vacancies have been created on the Edgefield County Fire Board due to the resignation of Ken Durham (Edgefield Fire Department) and Rudy Brooks (Merriwether Fire Department). Council received the following recommendations from each fire department:

- (1) **Appointment of Tim Glover to represent the Edgefield Fire Department**
- (2) **Appointment of Joey Smith to represent the Merriwether Fire Department**

Motion was made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by Councilman Kitchens, to appoint Tim Glover and Joey Smith to the Edgefield County Fire Board. Motion carried unanimously.

Old Business

Computer software upgrade

Computer software will have to be upgraded in order to comply with the new school property tax reform law which will benefit the school operations. The cost is approximately \$26,000.00. Chairman Kneece, Councilman Bright and Mr. Pettigrew talked with school officials concerning the school district purchasing the software. Hopefully that request will be considered on September 11th at a school board meeting. In the meantime though, the administrator felt it necessary to go ahead and pay for the software because the payment for this year (\$16,050) was due August 1st (next year \$10,700 will be due). In order to begin processing the tax bills for this year with the new law being considered, the county should go ahead and pay the \$16,050.00. Motion was

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made by Councilman Hudson, seconded by Councilman Kitchens, to approve paying the required fee for the software upgrade for the new school property tax law. Motion carried unanimously.

Administrator's report

Communication is still taking place with the county's insurer concerning the Neighborhood Center. An estimated cost of replacement value of that building from a local construction company has been received and, in addition, the insurer has an estimate from a national construction company. They are to get back with us an offer. We are in on-going discussions and hopefully we will have something favorable to report by the next meeting.

The football jamboree will be held Saturday, September 15th at Bettis Park, 9:30 a.m.. All of the football teams and cheerleaders will be there for the kick-off of the new season.

The new ambulance that was approved by council to be purchased has arrived. Not quite ready to be put on the road for calls

The new morgue for the Coroner at the hospital has been installed and the finishing "touches" are being added.

John Sullivan, Chairman of the Water & Sewer Authority for twelve years, passed away Saturday, Sept. 1st after a long battle with lung cancer. His funeral will be Thursday at 11:00.

No guests. Rick Green with Upper Savannah COG had nothing to report.

Comments from the public

Mr. Bob Ramsey signed to speak but declined.

Mayor Willie Campbell, Johnston, was recognized to address council concerning activities, education programs, etc. for the young people of Johnston. Mayor Campbell would like for this to be a county endeavor. It was suggested that there be a plan as to what exactly Johnston wanted/needed and have the Johnston Town Council endorse the plan. Councilman Kitchens stated he would like to know all of the funded organizations that are in the county budget to see if they can help out.

Councilman Dorn again reiterated the request by Sheriff Dobey to hire two additional deputies. The hiring of additional deputies hinges on a grant he has applied for and the results of that grant should be known sometime in September.

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Basketball activity was brought up by Mr. Dorn. He stated there is soccer, baseball, and football but nothing for basketball. As the recreation director replied there was basketball during the months of January and February – third year. There were approximately 75 to 80 youth participating.

Mr. Dorn also asked about the position (Code Enforcement Officer) in the Building Department that was filled. He wanted to know if it was advertised and the administrator stated it was posted on the county bulletin board, county web site and advertised in the local newspapers. The qualifications were: knowledge of plumbing and electrical work, ability to work with others, ability to pass exam to be certified. The requirements were met. The person hired has twenty years of experience working with plumbing and electrical work.

Mr. Dorn stated there were concerns from Mealing Grove Church of a developer trying to get some of the church's land condemned in order to build homes. The chairman did not understand that because a request like that would certainly have to go through a government entity.

Claims approved as follows:

PAYROLL:	7/30/07 thru 8/12/07	
Regular.....		\$211,532.23

PAYROLL:	8/13/07 thru 8/26/07	
Regular.....		\$213,709.09

General Operating.....	\$1,010,543.03
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No executive session.

There being no further business, the motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Dorn, seconded by Councilman Hudson. The next regular scheduled meeting will be held Tuesday, October 2, 2007, in the County Council Chambers, 225 Jeter Street, Edgefield.

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C. Monroe Kneece, Chairman

Willie C. Bright, Vice Chairman

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Joel D. Hudson, Councilman

B. Everette Kitchens, Councilman

ATTEST

Barbara R. Stark, Clerk to Council